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They Said We Would Have a Vacation

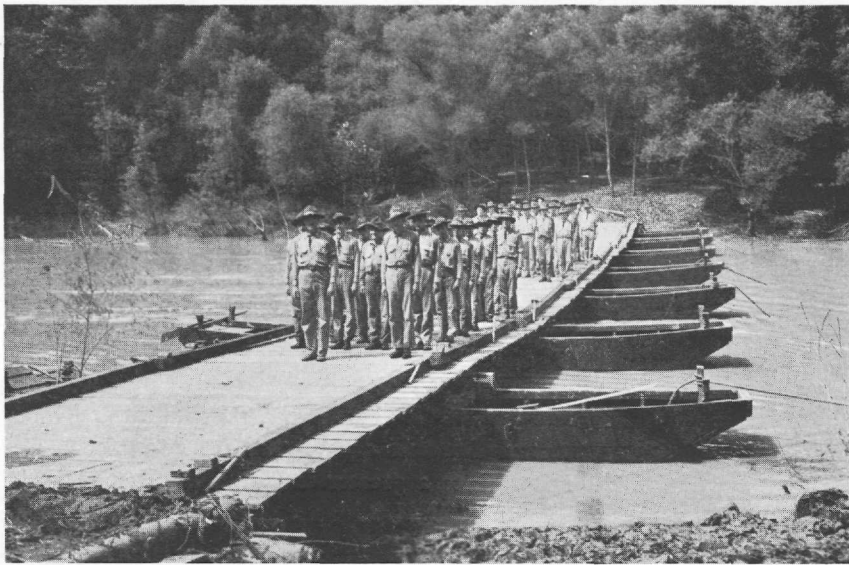
By R. B. BARRY

SUNDAY, June 19, 1938 found the Senior R.O.T.C. Engineers of Ohio State arriving at Fort Knox, Kentucky, our home-to-be for the next six weeks. It had been raining at Knox for at least twenty-four hours, so that the usually dusty landscape was ankle deep in mud and water upon our arrival. Rolling up our trouser legs in a useless effort to protect our only civilian clothes—those which we wore, we began our Army life. With customary Army efficiency we were rushed through a registration, a physical examination, and a complete outfitting in khaki, which included three uniforms, a field hat, breeches, puttees, two pairs of shoes, the useful blue denims, and a raincoat. Arms full, we sought out our tents and spent the rest of Sunday cleaning out mud, arranging our tents, and meeting our fellow sufferers from The University of West Virginia, and Rose Polytechnic Institute.

Monday morning we were rudely awakened at 5:30 a. m., by bugle and band, to begin our first day of real Army life. We dressed in our new uniforms only to find that they followed the old Army tradition of two

sizes, too large and too small. After policing our Company C area we marched to the mess hall to get our first taste of Army food. A little to our surprise we found the food to be A-1 both in quality and quantity, although we will admit that meat and potatoes three meals a day for six weeks didn't offer much variety. After breakfast, came the day's work consisting of exercise, drill, classes, more drill, lunch, more drill, more classes, time to clean up, inspection, dinner, and free time, provided no guard duty or K.P. We, of Company C, heard a rumor that we were to be free at 3:30 each afternoon to swim, play tennis, etc., but for some reason (???) we just couldn't seem to get done in time for these recreations. However, our evenings were our own, barring K.P. and guard duty, and we were all ready to take advantage of them. There were two theaters, and the Post Exchange to help pass the short time between dinner and taps at 11:00.

It wasn't long until they gave us a gun, then followed two hectic but enjoyable weeks on the rifle range. Sore arms, scarred noses, sunburned hands, frayed nerves, and a few medals were the visible results of our range ex-



The ROTC Engineers Company stands at attention on a heavy pontoon bridge which they erected in forty minutes.

perience. Our time on the range was divided equally between the firing line and the pits. Both were sun-baked, hot, unglamorous places. The story is told that there once was a tree at Fort Knox but it looked so lonesome that the General Staff ordered it cut down, so our only shade was provided by tent flies and campaign hats. Firing for record finished our two weeks on the range, and exposed several Expert Riflemen in our O.S.U. ranks.

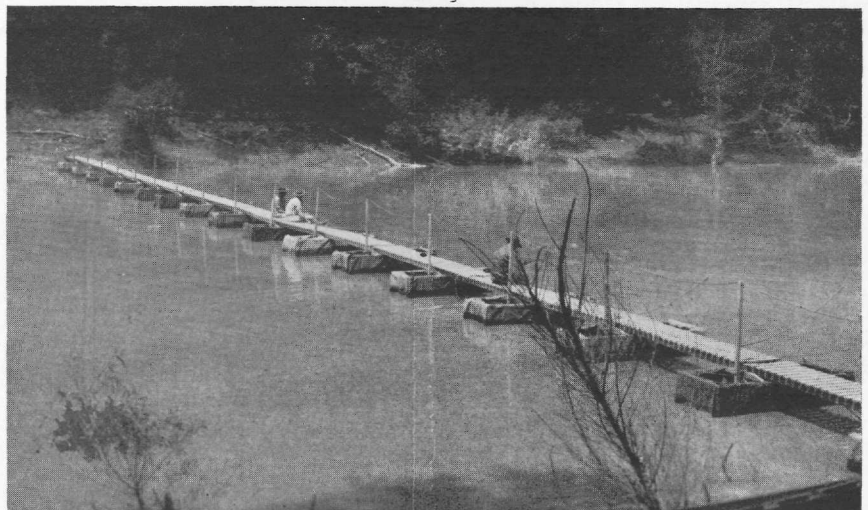
Having learned to correctly use a rifle we now started on our combat problem which covered the most interesting two days of the entire six weeks. Leaving camp at six in the morning we marched under full pack with rifle until nine at which time we stopped for a much needed rest. Light packs were made, ammunition issued, and Company C started out to gain the bridge head on Porter River Road at Salt River. Company A-5th Engineers of the Regular Army were defending the bridge site and proved to be worthy opponents. Soon our point met the enemy, a shot was fired, a machine gun chattered, three of our men were hit, the "Battle of The Blackberry Patch" was on. For three hours

we crawled on our elbows dragging our legs over rocks and briar bushes, taking an occasional swig of warm salt water and a few shots at the enemy. Around us our buddies were picked off one by one by that chattering machine gun. Enemy fire had us pinned to the ground, our advance was halted. Then one of our flank patrols drove their machine guns from the top of Hooker Mountain, our attack advanced, we drove the enemy back and proceeded victoriously to the camp site at the bridge head. After a good swim and a hearty supper we turned in, sleeping peacefully through a young tornado which practically blew away all our belongings back at Company C street in the R.O.T.C. area.

Two days on the pistol range convinced us that the 45 automatic is no toy. Aim at the Bulls-eye, squeeze the trigger, and see the dust kick up four feet in front of the target. What a way to spend two days!

For the last three weeks of camp the Engineers were in their glory. Bridge construction (floating and fixed), road work, rigging, and trench digging all helped to pass the time away. Pontoon bridging was the most interesting part of the camp work. Two days of prac-

An Infantry foot-bridge across Salt River.



tise on a small lake, and then an actual problem in river crossing at Salt River. The heavy pontoon equipage was towed over clay roads, turned into bogs by two days of rain, to the bridge site. The bridge went up in record time and, believe it or not, carried the mechanized artillery without dampening a wheel. The fixed trestle bridge was built on a day so rainy that the artillery boys didn't even leave their tents except to eat. We Engineers swore that the Major was trying to give us all double pneumonia, but we all lived through it so I guess we have no kick coming. After all we did get paid 70c a day.

This work concluded our practical experience, the rest of the time being devoted to demonstrations by the Chemical Warfare, Mechanized Cavalry, and Infantry regiments stations at Fort Knox.

The highlights of our social life were two fine dances in Louisville where some of the boys met some very nice southern belles, (for details see Cadet Major Fellows). The all day trip to Mammoth Cave, with a delicious chicken dinner served by the mess at the cave, was one of the experiences that will help us to remember our

six weeks at Knox for a long, long time. Another thing we won't forget for awhile were the fight nights with Engineers McCarthy, Kerss, Drake, Stebleton, Abel, Willis, Seaman, Ogden, and "Canvass Back Steve" upholding the laurels of Company C.

To you Juniors who go to camp next summer we give you Fort Knox and six of the best weeks you will ever spend in any lifetime. You will work and sweat, gripe and find fault, but you will love it and come home agreeing with us that it is an experience that can come but once in a lifetime. We also give to you our own original song to be sung to the tune of "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean",—

They said we would have a vacation,

They said we would have a good time,

They said we would make lots of money,

They fed us a h—l of a line.

(For chorus and variations see any Senior Officer.)

Several of our Senior Officers attended the Chemical Warfare Camp at Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland. Their experiences were much the same as ours except that Chemical Warfare tactics were stressed.